



LifeLines

information for your life

FITNESS TIP: Spring Into Fitness

Those dark, dreary, cold winter days are over, and spring has sprung! No more using the cold weather as an excuse for not making exercise a regular habit! Get up and get moving with these easy tips to stay motivated.

- Journal to track progress. It is an easy and inexpensive way to track your successes. You can find online exercise journals or apps for your smartphone, use your calendar, or just write on a piece of paper.
- Start taking small steps. Get off the bus at an earlier stop, park a little farther away from the entrance to work or the store, or take the dog for a walk instead of just letting him out the back door. Every extra step helps.
- If fitting in 30 minutes of exercise per day seems daunting, try quick fits. Exercise three times a day for 10 minutes, or just start with 15 minutes and work your way up to 30 minutes.
- Hire a personal trainer. Just one session can refresh your old routine and get you back on track.
- Work out with a friend or your family. It keeps you both accountable, and having a workout partner is fun! If you are a parent, show your kids that an active lifestyle is a healthy lifestyle. *continued on page 4*

TALKING TO TWEENS ABOUT SEXUALITY

It's kind of an amazing transformation—and it inevitably happens overnight. One day your little girl is running around in her brother's used jeans, and the next she's a 9-year-old who's lecturing you about the latest fashions and makeup trends. Or maybe it's your girl-hating son suddenly talking about the girl in his sixth-grade class he's "going with." You may have expected this when your kids turned into teenagers. But before middle school? Well, you're not alone. Parents all across the country are scratching their heads and wondering what's going on. Advertisers call it KGOY, or Kids Getting Older Younger. So what's a parent of a too-old-for-lecturing kid to do? Most experts all have the same advice: Rather than pretending it's not happening, talk about it with your children and come up with solutions together.

WHEN IS TOO EARLY?

By the age of 12, most kids are ready for the facts about sex and reproduction. They need to know about sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). They need to know about the consequences of teen pregnancy. Depending upon your beliefs, you may want to talk about different types of birth control or choosing abstinence. Study after study has shown that getting information does not make children more sexually active. As a matter of fact, it's likely to have the opposite effect.

HOW CAN I APPROACH THE SUBJECT?

It's very easy for parents to tell themselves, "We'll get into it when the right moment comes along." But especially if you managed to gloss over the subject of sexuality when your kids were small, that perfect opportunity is unlikely to present itself.

Instead of one "birds-and-bees" sit-down, think about raising the topic whenever there's an opening. Keep things short

and chatty, and try to be curious, not judgmental. Always connect sexuality with personal values. While watching TV, look at the teen characters and their choices: Do the programs deal with all the issues and possible consequences of an action? While you're in the car and the radio's on, listen to song lyrics: How do you feel about the messages you each hear? Discuss news articles and share short stories with your child.

Also, pay close attention to questions and concerns from your tween about "someone at school" or "a friend you don't know." Respect your child's need for anonymity and privacy. It encourages your child to see you as a good source of information. You all may be a bit uncomfortable talking about sexuality, especially at first. But your tween will probably appreciate hearing, "I need to learn how to feel comfortable talking about this. My parents never talked about these things to me."

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Contact Us



TOLL-FREE: **800-236-7905**
TTY/TTD: **414-771-4808**

www.impactinc.org



USERNAME: **wing**
PASSWORD: **eap**



NETWORKING TIPS

“You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.”

—Dale Carnegie, author of *How to Win Friends and Influence People*

Networking is one of the best ways to market yourself. But many people fail to take advantage of all the networking opportunities open to them. You can network at work, at a party, in a grocery store, while you walk your dog—anywhere there are people. But there’s more to networking than just trading cards and hoping that someone will enhance your business or find you a new job, apartment, or circle of friends.

The key to good networking is to build connections when you don’t need them, so that they’re available when you do. Networking is like planting seeds in a garden: To reap the benefits of what you’ve sown, you must nurture your contacts. Successful networking requires thought, planning, and attention to detail.

Friendly people often make the best networkers.

KEY NETWORKING POINTERS

It’s better to give than receive.

Networking is more about fostering relationships and less about selling. Put the needs of others first, and don’t always expect something in return. For instance, offer to supply the report for which a business acquaintance is looking. The more you do for others, the more likely they’ll be to help you achieve your goals. Successful networkers agree that while not every contact produces rewards right away, they generally receive as much as or more than they give.

Practice the art of small talk.

The art of conversation is important. Effective small talk is the informal exchange of information such as your name, where you live, what you do for a living, and some activities you do for fun or profit. Small talk enables people to quickly establish rapport, discover common interests, and learn how they can help one another achieve goals. But small talk has to go somewhere, so use it as a step toward more substantive topics.

Learn to listen.

Whether you’re at a conference, hanging out at the water cooler, or stuck in an elevator with a potential partner, avoid talking too much. Give the other person a chance to share and contribute. Don’t take up too much of a contact’s time. Know how to end conversations. Practice using phrases such as “I’ve really enjoyed talking with you” and “I’d like to continue this conversation. May I call you?”

Work a room with confidence.

Conventions, association meetings, or networking groups are obvious places to make contacts. But are you making the most of these opportunities? Here are some helpful hints when it comes to networking in business and social situations:

- Get out of your comfort zone. Introduce yourself to as many new people as possible. Avoid talking to just friends or coworkers.
- Brush up on current events, or the latest industry happenings, so you can talk about more than the weather.
- Have business cards with you at all times.
- Prepare and practice a 30-second “infomercial” about yourself. This should explain who you are and what you do.
- Put the needs of others above your own. Show interest in other people and offer help. Avoid talking nonstop about yourself and what you want.
- Introduce people you’ve met to others who you think might have mutual interests. Ask to be introduced to someone you’d like to meet.

Remember that some networking attempts won’t yield anything significant. Even the best networkers don’t get results from every situation. But by steadily increasing contacts, you’re more often in a position to help or be helped by the people you meet. That’s what networking is all about.

Adapted from King, D. (Reviewed 2012). Networking tips. Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.



WAYS TO BALANCE YOUR TIME

Working and caring for an older relative? These tips can help you manage your time:

Set priorities. Decide what is important, less important, and in between. You may need to say no even if it might disappoint others. Set priorities for your own needs, family needs, job needs, and the older person's needs. You may have to limit community service until you have fewer demands on your time.

- **Schedule separate time for the older person and your family.** Everyone should know which time is theirs. For older persons living out of town, you might spend a week or weekend every month with them, depending on their condition.
- **Schedule a telephone hour at work.** This might be during lunch, when the older person, family, or doctors may call you.
- **Rearrange commitments creatively.** Schedule appointments and errands to make the most of your time.
- **Invest time or money in things that will help you manage tasks.** Consider using a computer, bookkeeper, housekeeper, or community resources.
- **Arrange with your employer to make up time away from the office.** Try to set up a flexible schedule if your family demands seem to be too much.
- **Meet with other caregivers and self-help groups for support.** Sharing eases tension, gives a new view of the situation, increases understanding, and builds support. Support groups help you feel less alone. They give you a chance to share what you have learned.
- **Accept your limitations.** Get help from another family member, a neighbor, or community services when you need to take a break. What will you give up that will make life easier for you? Perhaps it is membership in a club that doesn't interest you anymore or a committee that you have served on for a long time.
- **Make time for yourself.** Set aside time on a regular basis to be alone, take a walk, exercise, or just have quiet time,

even for a short period. You will be more productive, have more energy, and know yourself better. The person you care for will also benefit when you take time to renew yourself. Take time to be with friends or to do things that you enjoy. This will help you be a more relaxed caregiver and prevent you from burning out.

- **Keep good records.** Working with service providers, insurance companies, and others is often confusing and time-consuming. Keep track of contacts and information. Avoid overrelying on your memory. Make notes as you talk in person or over the telephone. Keep brochures and other information provided by organizations and agencies. Keep copies of letters you write regarding services, as well as those you receive. Ask lots of questions. No question is a dumb one. Clip and file articles about services you may need.

Excerpted from Franck Cyr, L. (Modified 2008, August 12). Balancing work, family, and caregiving (Bulletin #4204). Retrieved August 7, 2012, from the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Web site at <http://extension.umaine.edu>





TALKING TO TWEENS... continued from page 1

HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

You as a parent are the best judge of where to draw the line. Do you give your kids more information? More freedom? Many parents find themselves in a real bind when they come up against fashions and trends. It seems as if kids are being pushed to act like adults before they realize what their actions might mean to someone else.

Malls display revealing clothing and styles for young women that are provocative, to say the least. Many girls in grade school want the trends modeled by their favorite pop stars. Boys aren't immune to the pressure of conforming, either. Many young boys talk big about girls. But preadolescent relationships are rarely cause for concern. Early romances do provide a great opportunity for parents to talk about the importance of values, respect, and self-esteem in any relationship—and to talk about the damage negative remarks about women can cause.



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- Mark it on your calendar, even at the office. Treat exercise like any other appointment; don't cancel it for other activities. Exercise is just as important as going to the dentist or doctor.
- Change your mindset. Get back in touch with why you exercise in the first place. Are you exercising because you want to improve your health or lose weight or live longer? Write your reasons down and post them where you can see them every day.
- Try a new type of exercise. Always wanted to try Zumba or ballroom dancing? Now is a great time to give it a try and see if you like it. Doing activities that you enjoy will make you more likely to establish new lifestyle habits.

Lastly, remember to reward yourself for a job well done. Go buy yourself some new running shoes or download some new songs to keep you motivated on the treadmill. All that hard work and determination has not gone unnoticed; you deserve it! When pool and beach season arrives in a few months, you'll be glad you got moving!

Fink, C., & Grasso, D. 2012. Fitness Tip: Spring Into Fitness. Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.

When coming up with rules about “grown-up” fashions for girls, as well as acceptable social behavior for tween boys and girls, consider the following tips:

- Don't overreact or make threats. Ask your son about his girlfriend, and get to know his friends. If your daughter wants to buy a low-cut blouse, don't rush to judgment or “never in my house!”
- Find their motivation. Tweens are at an awkward age, and usually make choices to “fit in” and be like someone, or everyone, else. If they've got a role model, discuss that image. Perhaps you can agree upon another example, someone worth the respect.
- Be clear about your reasons. If you feel a certain style is inappropriate, make sure your child knows why. If it's because you feel it's sending the wrong message, be careful that your concerns are spelled out and not taken as a personal insult.
- Come up with rules together. Sit down with your child and decide upon rules and limitations you can both live with, including consequences if the rules are broken. Be prepared to follow through!
- Tell your kids it's OK to be a kid. Share stories of your own insecurities and experiences as a child, and keep yourself from using “Oh, you look so grown-up!” as a compliment.
- As time goes by, reexamine rules. Things do change. Look at the guidelines you've set as your child matures, and make sure you're still on a reasonable track.

As in so many areas of parenting, being open and honest about these tricky issues will go a long way toward helping your not-so-little children develop a healthy attitude about human sexuality.

Webb, J. (Reviewed 2012). Talking to tweens about sexuality. Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.